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A study of the political relationships between elementary-secondary and higher education in 12 large States reveals that while at present there is little conflict between the two levels, there is also little cooperation. Several social forces are causing increasing attention to be focused on the division between the two levels. Factors lying behind the growing conflict between the two levels include (1) a breakdown of the traditional forces of educational politics at the elementary-secondary level caused by disunity of teachers and administrators, and (2) the increasing cohesion and political power of higher education. Differing kinds of educational structures in the States are closely related to the operation of political forces between the levels. Financing education, especially the competition for State funds, is the most critical problem that will affect interlevel relations of the future. Another potential problem area is the control and orientation of education in the 13th and 14th grades along with control over vocational-technical education. In conclusion, the relationship between elementary-secondary and higher education verges on open conflict while policy makers seldom recognize the relationship as one worthy of attention. (HW)

THE DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELEMENTARY-SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN AMERICAN STATES

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The Developing Relationship Between Elementary-Secondary and Higher Education in American States*

The fragmentation of American education is a topic frequently commented upon by students of educational politics. Division of responsibility for education among levels and units of government has developed out of the political, social, regional and governmental pluralism of American life. One dimension of this fragmentation, the separation of elementary-secondary from higher education, has become so well established that it scarcely commands attention. It is as though we assume that there is a distinction between the two levels that is natural in character. There seems to be no particularly persuasive reason why elementary-secondary and higher education should be regarded as mutually exclusive compartments of educational effort. Recently, forces have begun to develop that call into question this artificial dichotomization of educational levels. Both the fact of separation of the two spheres

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and the prospect that they may be pushed closer together have far-reaching consequences for the structures and policies of American education as a whole.

The project upon which this paper is based examined the political relationships between elementary-secondary and higher education in twelve of the nation's largest states: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Through interviews with a variety of governmental and educational officials and examination of documentary and newspaper sources, an attempt was made to discern the trends in inter-level educational politics and the forces that are bringing them about. Basically, the problems focused upon were these: What was the status of inter-level relationships (as of the summer of 1967)? Were changes in relationships taking shape? If so, through what processes and institutions? How did patterns of change differ among states, and why? In what circumstances did either conflict or cooperation between levels appear to be taking shape? It must be remembered as we review the evidence that the size of our sample of states precludes any but the most tentative of generalizations.

Three sources of social pressure are causing more attention to be centered upon the division between elementary-secondary education and higher education. One is the expanding cost of education of all types, the result of population growth, heightened aspirations, new technologies, and generally mounting prices. A second is the increasing tendency to question established educa-

tional forms and procedures, including obstacles to individualization and flexibility in the educational process. A third pressure is the rising demand for educational services that overlap or fall between the customary spheres of the collegiate and secondary school systems. This latter is variously the product of new occupational skill needs, expanded leisure time, and economic demands that the entry of young people into the labor market be delayed.

The political relationships in education in the states are responding to these sources of social pressure in various ways. These responses, of course, cannot be simply described, for they involve many dimensions, many issues, and many institutions. Thus in one state the situation may be quiescent in respect to one aspect of inter-level politics and volatile in respect to another. In general, however, relationships within states can be described as follows. Open political conflict between elementary-secondary and higher education is scarcely to be found on any broad scale in any state, though in a few instances there has been friction over specific issues. Likewise, there is little generalized cooperation between levels. There is, however, some cooperation which again tends to be ad hoc and particular to given events or special functions. Institutional mechanisms for coordination across levels exist in three of the states in the sample, but the newness precludes reliable judgment on their actual effects.

Beyond the question of meaningful interactions between educa-

tional levels lies the important issue of the perception of the situation held by the people involved. While our evidence on this point is only semi-systematic, it suggests that few think of generalized conflict between levels as part of the picture of educational politics, and few see the development of coordinative devices as an immediate need. Most of the apprehension about future conflict was expressed by respondents in the elementary-secondary sector, with state policymakers occasionally foreseeing difficulty in the not too distant future.

While rather little thought is thus given to relations between levels as a general phenomenon, many people are aware of them as they bear on specific issues. For example, when asked about the future of educational finance in the states or the prospects for expanded vocational-technical education, many respondents were aware of the convergencies of interest of elementary-secondary and higher education and predicted political difficulty for efforts at accommodation. In a fashion typical of American politics, most tend to see education as a discrete batch of issues handled piecemeal and only accidentally connected to one another. Thus however tangible the problems that cross the two levels may be, they tend not to be interpreted as parts of a broad pattern of issues but as relatively isolated events. Nonetheless, our investigation has led us to conclude that most states are nearing the point where open conflict between elementary-secondary and higher education is likely or where new means of coordination, formal or informal, must be

found. In the pages that follow we attempt to outline some of the factors that lie behind this process of change.

Political backgrounds

The politics of elementary-secondary education in the past few decades has been heavily influenced by the professionalization and institutionalization of the educational function. The development of education as a functional specialty and the establishment of qualifications for entry promoted a sense of identity among practitioners and served as a basis for the creation of strong professional groups. These have tended to behave in "responsible" ways and to use a rhetoric oriented to public service. Thus education came to be a recognized and respected profession with strong coherence and much influence in the conduct of the elementary and secondary schools. In most places the politics of the public schools has been dominated from inside by the administrators and teachers along with their allies in other parts of the society. In the nature of things, the organized forces of education have had few natural political enemies and much social support. Often an "education coalition" centering around a teachers' organization has been the critical force in determining state policy for elementary and secondary schools.

There are widespread indications that these traditional patterns are breaking down, a trend with important implications for the relationship between levels. Some reasons for this shift are

obvious. Professional educators have lost much of their unity as teachers have become more militant. Administrators and other elements in the education structure have tended to pull away, out of fright or disillusionment with new teacher attitudes. Elementary-secondary education itself in many states no longer seems to present a united political front, and some of its old allies have drifted away. Furthermore, the entire range of public school aims and practices have more and more been called into question in recent years. To greater or lesser degree, in all of the states in our sample the traditional forces of educational politics were said by our respondents to be breaking down.

A major consequence of this trend is the development of more fluidity in the political situation. Where formerly the elementary-secondary education establishment was a sort of rock upon which all else was founded, there is now much less structure and certainty. In some cases a vacuum exists; in nearly all cases adjustments are taking shape. Out of this situation grows the probability of new political relationships between the levels of education.

The politics of higher education have not been so regular and settled. Generally speaking, the needs on this level have not been so high nor the forces so powerful and focussed. Most of the power in higher education has come not from the inside professionals, but from a shifting variety of outside interests. While the picture is still much this way, it too appears to be undergoing alteration. With the rise in the college-educated proportion of the population,

the growth in demand for college opportunities, and the creation of new governmental structures for higher education, this sector has developed more political cohesion and clout. Given the symptoms of disarray in elementary-secondary education, the prospects seem to be increasing for higher education to fare well when relationships do develop.

State educational structures and inter-level relationships

The generation of new relationships of either conflict or cooperation between levels of educational systems is also intertwined with the condition of educational government. The formal and informal structures in the educational field reflect the operation of political forces and in turn affect the shape and use of those forces. Some of the differences among states in the political relationship between educational levels can doubtless be accounted for by structural variations. Three points of organizational structure are pertinent: those that govern elementary-secondary education, those that govern higher education, and those that are designed to bridge the two.

Among our sample states there are several different patterns of government of elementary-secondary education, indeed, nearly as many patterns as states. These include elected superintendents, elected superintendents and no board, ex officio board, and both board and superintendent appointed. At this level, formal differences of structure do not probably make much difference, but informalities that have grown up around these structures do. Two

factors would seem to lie behind the disjointed, cumbersome character of these educational structures - the desire to separate education from politics and the desire to relieve legislatures and governors of responsibility in this politically ticklish field.

To the extent that these aims have been accomplished, elementary-secondary education has been isolated from the main flow of state politics. In turn, the formal structures have in the past developed close symbiotic relations with the political forces of the education field described above. Thus in most states educational policy at the elementary-secondary level has been dominated by a combination of private power and public authority. This picture is not unique to education, but it is perhaps more striking here than in most policy sectors.

As the power of the educational "establishment" has declined, this combination has been eroded, in some cases to the point of conflict, in others to a state of uneasy alliance. Particularly as teacher militancy has grown, neither the professionals nor the public officials find it comfortable to be in such close association.

The principal consequence of this trend is the creation of a vacuum in educational policy-making. Old cues and connections no longer hold. Our impression is that in some states the legislatures have moved more boldly into the picture, and in some states educational politics is in disarray. This is critical for the relationship between elementary-secondary and higher education be-

cause the traditional political defenses of the former are down. As the levels move closer together, higher education may reap some advantages as a result.

The trend in the government of higher education has been in a somewhat different direction. Higher education in many states has not had integrated political structures, has not faced many political challenges, and has not developed strong organs of political power. With the growth of higher education and its increasing demands on resources, however, efforts have been made in some states, quite recently, to bring the diffuse structural situation into better focus, notably through the creation of higher education coordinating bodies. In many places these have not yet operated long enough to permit conclusions about their effects. On the basis of the evidence we have, however, it appears that the existence of these organs is seen as a threat by people in elementary-secondary education and may in fact raise the level of conflict between the two levels. Coming at a time when elementary-secondary education is somewhat disorganized, increased coordination in higher education may give the latter some significant advantages where issues precipitate inter-level conflict.

The third structural point important to our subject is the overall coordinating mechanism, the device specifically designed to bridge levels in education. These are rare and they vary substantially in function and pattern from state to state. With one exception, the New York Board of Regents, they are recent creations.

Hence their effectiveness is extremely difficult to gauge. Operating again on impression, and with due qualifications, we think there is some reason to believe that where there are over-all coordinating mechanisms there is less atmosphere of conflict between levels. Which is cause and which is effect lies far beyond our capacity to tell.

In sum, our research leads us to believe that the political situation between levels is related to structural features of educational government, but somewhat differently at different points. This by no means suggests, however, that mechanical structural reform will automatically reduce conflict and enhance coordination irrespective of underlying political conditions.

The critical issues

Earlier we pointed out that conflict and cooperation between educational levels seldom appears to be a generalized or abstract matter. It tends rather to be ad hoc, specific to issues and situations. Thus the political-structural forces we have been discussing come into play when problems develop at the points where the interests of elementary-secondary and higher education converge. In state after state a common set of issues tends to lie at those points. The substance of inter-level relations, in other words, revolves around these problem areas.

Without doubt the most important of these for the future is the problem of financing education. Historically, elementary-secondary and higher education have been funded from different or

seemingly different sources, the former in good part from real property taxes, the latter from a variety of fees and charges, federal grants, gifts, and appropriations from state general funds. These circumstances have limited the sense of competition for support between the two levels.

However, this arrangement is under pressure, both from increased demands for funds and from dissatisfaction with present revenue sources. Most particularly, resistance to local property taxes is creating pressure for higher state public school support. As the political force of this movement for property tax abatement grows, most states are likely to revise school revenue structures and draw more support for elementary-secondary education from their general funds. In such cases the likelihood of overt competition between levels will rise. The alternative to increased competition for the favor of state decision-makers would seem to be the establishment of new coordinative structures to screen and reconcile claims on the state treasury.

There is little conflict over funds now evident in our sample states, but many of those interviewed expressed beliefs that inter-level friction is developing or would in the near future. The luxury of the present situation seems unlikely to last long. Perhaps the states likely to surmount this threat of inter-level conflict are those now gaining experience with coordinating devices. As powerless as these inter-level mechanisms now are with respect to budgetary and fiscal questions, they do afford a connective tissue

and a hint of the possibilities of institutional coordination.

A second issue of importance to inter-level relations is the control and orientation of education in the 13th and 14th grades. Three general patterns are in use in the states of our sample. Some states have developed community or junior college systems with at least partial local control; some have invested in branch campuses of state universities; some have utilized a combination or have not settled on an approach. It is not at all clear that there is any systematic pattern in the way many states have handled education in the 13th and 14th grades.

Even in those states where the course of development of 13th and 14th grade education has been clear over a period of time, it has still been a matter of some controversy between elementary-secondary and higher education interests. Thus in California, where state policy declares junior colleges to be a part of the higher education system, the teachers association and the State Department have historically influenced them and continue to maintain an interest. In Indiana the branch campus device is firmly established, but the elementary-secondary interests have not been fully reconciled to the situation. As the very rapid expansion of 13th and 14th grade education continues, the possibility of inter-level conflict remains alive in many states.

The junior and community colleges have rarely developed cohesion among themselves. Their staffs have tended to divide between those with an orientation to the public sector and those

oriented to the college and university world. They also tend to be divided between those who favor state finance and control and those who wish to see local control predominant. It thus has been difficult for junior and community colleges to present a coherent policy thrust to the political authorities. This is not to say, however, that the community college idea has no political power, for it has a wide and practical appeal among legislators and their local constituents. It may be that the community colleges will in the future gain sufficient identity to make themselves a "third force" in educational politics, but they seem some distance from that at present.

Related to the community college-branch campus issue but rather different in effect is the question of the control over vocational-technical education in the states. Although this is an over-statement of the case, it almost seems as though while influence in 13th and 14th grade education has been something to be sought, responsibility in the vocational-technical field has been something to be avoided. Generally speaking, the latter appears to suffer lack of direction and commitment.

At the state level this function tends to be focussed in a bureau of the state department of education, with local programs offered in secondary schools, community colleges, and state colleges, and to some extent in special vocational schools. Higher education has usually had little interest in vocational-technical (as distinct from professional) training, and the junior and com-

munity colleges have often been pushed in the direction of academic emphasis. The secondary schools likewise have usually leaned toward a liberal arts orientation. Except in the vocational agriculture field, there has not been much organized power in the society at large promoting vocational-technical development. Much of the impetus has been supplied by federal grant-in-aid money.

Despite the obvious social importance of vocational-technical education in an urban, poverty-conscious age, it tends not to be an important focus of educational effort and hence not a probable source of much conflict. Some attribute the confusion in the field to federal bureaucratic intervention. However that may be, unless some pressure comes to bear for the rapid expansion of vocational-technical education within existing institutional frameworks, the issue is likely to float uncontested in some no-man's land of educational politics.

Other issues have also had some play in inter-level relations and remain as possible points of irritation and possible foci of cooperation. Notable among these are questions of teacher training and certification and of admission standards for college entrance. In some states, e.g., California, the problem of academic requirements of teachers has been a substantial matter of contention between the elementary-secondary professionals and college and university interests, with other groups sometimes involved. In Indiana, on the other hand, it has served as a major point of contact

and conciliation. As compared to other issues, these seem likely to comprise rather minor elements in the total picture of inter-level educational politics.

Some trends and conclusions

The implications of these findings may be evaluated differently by different people, according to predispositions about the ends of educational policy and the nature of democratic politics. Some, for example, may tend to regard coordination as good in itself, and some may think of piecemeal decision-making as intrinsically meritorious. We have tried to hold ourselves free from such commitments and have attempted to evaluate inter-level relationships from the standpoint of the over-all future of educational policies and responsiveness in policy-making. Such an effort, of course, finally rests on deeper value commitments.

In general, we have been pushed toward the conclusion that some inter-level coordination in education would be a desirable step. The specific forms it might take, and indeed the degree of formality involved, would need to be determined by local culture, tradition, and the array of local politics. Without some effort at coordination, however, any approach to more rational planning and use of resources in education seems likely to founder. If this happens, legislatures will make policy without adequate information, funds will be allocated without consideration of the

whole range of relative needs, and some program areas will be untended or be the subject of irrelevant political bickering. Without help, state political decision-makers will not be likely to have the perspective to see the whole educational picture as their field of action.

Perhaps our two most general conclusions are that in most states the relationship between elementary-secondary and higher education verges on open conflict, and that policy-makers seldom recognize the relationship as one worthy of attention. They have been content to confront problems piece-by-piece and only when necessary. Meanwhile, forces have been developing quickly that raise questions as to whether this luxury can long be afforded. The financial situation of education requires massive reconsideration; technological and economic change raise needs for new vocational training and retraining; more and better trained teachers must be found for the public schools. These goals may not be reached, or not in time, through bit-by-bit policy revision. These, too, are the issues likely to stimulate conflict. Some assurance might be gained from the general strengthening of state political institutions, but the best prospect for turning inter-level relations away from conflict and toward accommodation, if that is desireable, would seem to lie in the direction of overall coordinative structures.